

Outline of a Doctrine Of French Policy

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Editor's note: In the aftermath of World War II, the philosopher Alexandre Kojève presented the French government his "Outline of a Doctrine of French Policy," a document that remains today of scholarly, historical, philosophical, and — perhaps most startlingly — contemporary interest. This unabridged translation marks its first appearance in English. It was translated from the French by Erik de Vries, who recently completed his doctoral dissertation, "A Kojèvian Citizenship Model for the European Union," at Carleton University and now works as a policy analyst for the Canadian government. An interpretive essay by Robert Howse begins on page 41.

TWO DANGERS THREATEN France in the postwar world. The first is more or less immediate; the other is much more distant but also incomparably graver.

The immediate danger is the German danger, which is not military, but economic and thus political. It is that Germany's economic potential (even cut off from its eastern provinces) is such that the inevitable incorporation of this country — whose restoration to "democratic" and "peaceful" will be attempted — into the European system will inevitably lead to France's reduction to the rank of a secondary

Translator's note: The text is drawn from a typescript transcribed by Kojève's biographer, Dominique Auffret, a copy of which fell into my hands courtesy of Hugh Gillis. A copy of the typescript is available at the Hoover Institution Archives. A portion of the text was previously published in *La Règle du Jeu* (May 1990, No. 1). Where I have corrected obvious typographical errors in the typescript, I have indicated the change in a footnote. I have retained Kojève's capitalization of certain words as they appear in the typescript despite inconsistencies. Where an English rendition both meaningful and exact is impossible, I have indicated words added in square brackets. This translation benefited from the invaluable advice of Robert Howse and Patrick Fothergill, to whom I am most grateful. Errors remaining are mine.

power within continental Europe, unless it reacts in a manner as energetic as it is reasoned.

The more distant danger is, it is true, less certain. But on the other hand, it could be described as mortal, in the strict sense of the word. It is the danger that France is running of being involved in a Third World War and serving anew as an aerial or other kind of battlefield in it. But it is very clear that in this eventuality, and independently of the outcome of the conflict, France will never again be able to repair the damages which it will necessarily suffer: above all on the demographic plane, but also on the economic one and that of civilization itself.

French policy, foreign as well as domestic, thus finds itself faced with two tasks of vital importance, which practically determine all the others:

— on the one hand, real neutrality must be ensured as much as possible during a possible war between Russians and Anglo-Saxons;

— on the other hand, during peacetime it is important to keep the country, in contrast to Germany, at the first economic and political rank in non-Soviet continental Europe.

It is to determine the necessary and sufficient conditions under which this double goal has a serious chance of being achieved that the following pages were written.

I. The Historical Situation

I.

*T*HERE IS NO doubt that we are currently witnessing a decisive turning point in history, comparable to the one that took place at the end of the Middle Ages. The beginning of the modern age is characterized by the unstoppable process of the progressive elimination of “feudal” political formations dividing the national units to the benefit of kingdoms, which is to say of *nation*-States. At present, it is these nation-States which, irresistably, are gradually giving way to political formations which transgress national borders and which could be designated with the term “Empires.” Nation-States, still powerful in the nineteenth century, are ceasing to be *political* realities, States in the strong sense of the term, just as the medieval baronies, cities, and archdioceses ceased to be States. The modern State, the current political reality, requires a larger foundation than that represented by Nations in the strict sense. To be *politically* viable, the modern State must rest on a “vast ‘imperial’ union of affiliated¹ Nations.” The modern State is only truly a State if it is an Empire.

¹Kojève here uses the term *apparenté*. Following Robert Howse’s suggestion, I translate this throughout as “affiliated,” rather than the normally more direct “related.” The former term retains the French original’s sense of affinity without ascribing to Kojève any concept of ethnic unity, against which he argues unambiguously in the text following.

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The historical process which formerly replaced feudal entities with national States, and which is currently breaking down Nations to the benefit of Empires, can and must be explained by *economic causes*, which manifest themselves politically in and through the requirements of military technology. It is the appearance of firearms, and notably of *artillery*, which ruined the political power of medieval subnational formations. The feudal “Prince” — baron, bishop, city — was capable of arming his vassal-citizens with swords and spears, and he maintained himself politically as long as this armament sufficed to enable support for a possible war, with his political independence at stake. But when it was necessary to maintain an artillery to be able to defend oneself, the economic and demographic bases of the feudal political formations showed themselves to be insufficient, and this is why these formations were progressively absorbed by national States, which alone were able to arm themselves in an adequate fashion. Likewise, nation-States were — and are still — sufficient economic and demographic foundations to maintain troops armed only with handguns, machine guns, and cannons. But such troops are no longer effective nowadays. They can do nothing against a truly modern army, which is to say motorized, armored, and involving an air force as an essential weapon. Now, strictly national economies and demographics are incapable of putting together armies of this kind, which Empires alone can maintain. Sooner or later these Empires will thus absorb nation-States politically.

*Nowadays
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This fundamental inadequacy — demographic and economic and, consequently, military and thus political — of national States is demonstrated in a particularly striking way by the example of the Third Reich. Throughout the High Middle Ages, Germany pursued an imperial project, at once anachronistic and premature, and thus utopian, which is to say without a real foundation in the present, and consequently unrealizable. The pursuit and inevitable failure of this project had as a consequence that Germany entered into the truly feudal period and emerged from it 150 years late, from which it has never known how to catch up since (never having been able to or having wanted to skip stages with a *revolutionary* act). So it was with a delay of a century and a half that Hitler began his political action. And thus he imagined and created his Third Reich as a State strictly in keeping with the “national” ideal, born at the end of the Middle Ages and having already reached its perfect form in the revolutionary ideology and its realization, signed with the names of *Robespierre* and *Napoleon*. For it is quite evident that the Hitlerian slogan: “*Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer*” is but a (poor) translation into German of the watchword of the French Revolution: “The Republic, one and indivisible.” And one could say that “*the Führer*” is but a *German Robespierre*, which is to say an anachronistic one, who — having

known how to master his Thermidor — was able to undertake the execution of the Napoleonic plan himself. Moreover, Hitler expressed the essence and the motive of his political thought very well by putting himself at the head of a movement which calls itself “national-socialism,” and which consciously contrasts itself with Soviet “imperial-socialism” as much as with Anglo-Saxon “imperial-capitalism.” Generally, the Third Reich was undoubtedly a *national* State, in the particular and precise sense of the term. This is a State which, on the one hand, strove to realize *all* national political possibilities, and which, on the other hand, wanted to use *only* the power of the German *nation*, by consciously establishing, qua State, the (ethnic) limits of the latter. Well, this “ideal” nation-State lost its crucial political war.

The German nation-state's super-human effort served only to delay its “fatal” outcome .

To explain the total military — and thus political — defeat of this nation-State, one cannot raise the limited size of its national base, as it is tempting to do when one tries to explain the crushing defeat of the Polish, Norwegian, Dutch, Belgian, Yugoslavian, and Greek national States. Nor can one speak of military incompetence, as is sometimes done to “explain” the fate of fascist Italy (which was also eminently “national”). Finally, there can also be no question of “causes” often raised in discussions of the collapse of France: disorder, lack of foresight, domestic political unrest, etc. The German national State pressed 80 million nationals into service, whose military and civic (if not moral) qualities

revealed themselves to be above all praise. Nonetheless, the superhuman political and military effort of the Nation served only to delay an outcome which can truly be called “fatal.”

And it is certainly the eminently and consciously *national* character of the German State which is the cause of this “fate.” For to be able to sustain a modern war, the Third Reich had to occupy and exploit non-German countries and import more than 10 million foreign workers. But a nation-State cannot assimilate non-nationals, and it must treat them politically as slaves. Thus Hitler’s “nationalist” ideology would have been enough by itself to ruin the imperial project of the “New Europe,” without which Germany could not, however, win the war. It can therefore be said that Germany lost this war because she wanted to win it as a *nation*-State. For even a nation of 80 million politically “perfect” citizens is unable to sustain the effort of a modern war and thus of ensuring the political existence of its State. And the German example proves clearly that nowadays, a nation, no matter which one, which persists in maintaining its *national* political exclusivity must sooner or later cease to exist politically: either through a peaceful process or as a result of a military defeat. By dispelling the illusions of the 1914-18 war, the current war, conducted by Empires, signaled the last act of the great tragedy which *national* States have performed for five centuries.

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2.

THE POLITICAL UNREALITY of Nations — which has been appearing in fact, if not in a notable fashion, since the end of the last century — was more or less clearly recognized from the beginning of this same period. *On the one hand*, “bourgeois” Liberalism proclaimed more or less publicly the end of the State as such, which is to say [the end] of the strictly political existence of Nations. By not conceiving of the State outside of the national setting, and by observing at the same time — more or less consciously — that the nation-State was no longer politically viable, Liberalism proposed to abolish it voluntarily. The essentially political — i.e., in the final analysis martial — entity, which is the State in the strict sense, had to be replaced by a simple economic and social, not to say a police Administration, put at the disposal and at the service of “Society” which had moreover been conceived of as an aggregate of individuals; the individual was supposed to embody and reveal, in his own isolation, the supreme human value. Thus conceived, the “statist” liberal administration had to be fundamentally peaceful and pacifist. Put differently, it did not have, strictly speaking, any “will to power,” and consequently had no effective need, nor adequate desire, for this “independence” or political autonomy which characterizes the very essence of the true State. *On the other hand*, “internationalist” Socialism believed it could see that political reality was in the process of moving from Nations to Humanity as such. If the State was still supposed to have political meaning and *raison d'être*, it could only have them on the condition of finding its foundation in “the human race.” Since political reality is deserting Nations and is moving on to Humanity itself, the only (provisionally national) State which will emerge as politically viable in the long term will be the one which has as its highest and first goal to include all of humanity. It is from this “internationalist” — not to say “socialist” — interpretation of the historical situation that the *Russian Communism* of the first era, which consequently united the Soviet State with the Third Internationale, was born.

But in fact the socialist-internationalist interpretation is just as wrong as the liberal-pacifist interpretation. Liberalism is wrong not to perceive any political entity beyond that of Nations. But internationalism's sin² is the fact that it sees nothing politically viable short of Humanity. It likewise was unable to discover the intermediary political reality of Empires, which is to say unions, or even international amalgamations of *affiliated nations*, which is exactly the political reality today. If the Nation really ceases to be a political reality, Humanity is still — politically — an *abstraction*. And this is why Internationalism is, at present, a “utopia.” Nowadays it learns, to its cost, that it is impossible to jump from the Nation to Humanity without going via

²Reading *péche* where the typescript says *pèche*.

Empire. Just as in the Middle Ages Germany had realized against its will that it was impossible to arrive at Empire without undergoing the feudal and national stages. Before being embodied in Humanity, the Hegelian *Weltgeist*, which has abandoned the Nations, inhabits Empires.

Stalin's political genius consists precisely in having understood this. The political focus on humanity characterizes the "Trotskyist" utopia, of which Trotsky himself was the most notable — but certainly not sole — representative. By taking on Trotsky, and by demolishing "Trotskyism" in Russia, Stalin rejoined the political reality of the day by creating the USSR as a Slavo-Soviet Empire. His anti-Trotskyist slogan: "Socialism in one country" engendered this "Sovietism," or if one prefers, this "imperial socialism," which manifests itself in and through the present Soviet imperial State, and which has no need of "classic," "second," "third," or any other internationalism. And this "imperial socialism," which turns out to be politically viable, conflicts with the "Trotskyist" utopia of "*humanitarian*" internationalist socialism exactly as much as with the Hitlerian anachronism of "*national-socialism*," founded on the politically antiquated reality of the Nation.

And it is likewise through the understanding of the *imperial* reality that the political genius of the English state's leaders, particularly that of Churchill, is manifested. Already before the war, this State had an "imperial" — i.e. trans- and international — structure in its appearance as the British Commonwealth, as the union of Dominions. But even this still-too- "national" "Empire" turned out to be inadequate to affirm itself politically under the conditions created by the present war. It is the Anglo-Saxon Empire, which is to say the Anglo-American politico-economic bloc, which is today the effective and actual political reality. And England's political genius appears in its having understood it, in having learned its lessons and suffered the consequences. So, instead of anticipating (following Germany's example) imaginary and spectacular Anglo-American "disputes," which — even if they exist — can only be transitional, it would be necessary to think and act politically by keeping in mind the existence, in the modern world, of an Anglo-Saxon bloc, firmly and intimately united, as much in its economy as in its politics.

3.

*I*T WOULD BE vain to try to maintain the political reality of any *Nation* in the long run, in a world where *Empires* already subsist: the Anglo-Saxon — indeed, the Anglo-American — Empire and the Slavo-Soviet Empire. Even the German Nation, by far the most powerful of Nations in the strict sense, can no longer conduct a victorious war, thus being unable to affirm itself politically as a State. And it is certain that even this fundamentally "utopian" people, characterized by a remarkable insensitivity to political realities, will never again undertake a war simultaneously

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against the two Empires in question. Put differently, the Germany of tomorrow will have to cleave politically to one or the other of these Empires.

It is possible, moreover, *to foresee that Germany will orient itself to the Anglo-Saxon side*. And it is hardly risking committing an error to suppose that the Anglo-American bloc will transform itself before long into a Germano-Anglo-Saxon Empire. For in 10 or 15 years, the USSR's economic and military — which is to say political — power will require and give rise to a counterweight in Europe. Now, the experience of 1940 proved that it is certainly not France which will be able to provide it. Only Germany (supported by the Anglo-Saxon world) is capable of playing this role, and there is therefore no doubt that the coming generation will be treated to the spectacle of a rearmed Germany.

Germany's membership in the Slavo-Soviet Empire is admittedly not absolutely impossible, but it is extremely improbable, indeed practically out of the question. First of all because a contemptuous, profound, and ancient hostility divides the Germans from the Slavs, whereas the national "kinship" between Germans and Anglo-Saxons, as well as a sincere — although not always reciprocal — sympathy for England, suggests the Anglo-Saxon orientation to Germany. Secondly, because the *Protestant* inspiration of the Prusso-German State puts it closer to the modern Anglo-Saxon States, themselves also born of the Reformation, and pits it against the Slavic States of the Orthodox tradition. Moreover, the visible signs of Anglo-Saxon power and affluence, demonstrated among other things by the treatment of prisoners and the behavior of occupying troops, impress all the more upon the Germans the boundless admiration they have always had for their cousins across the English Channel, whereas the scenes of destruction observed in the USSR seem to have created an "anti-Soviet" impression even among the working classes and pro-communist circles. All of this leads one to suppose that the men who will one day be in power in Germany will opt, without reservation, for the Anglo-Saxons if they can choose between them and the Russians. And the situation, moreover, seems to be viewed in the same way in London. And one would say that even in Moscow nobody anticipates the possibility of a political absorption of Germany. For otherwise neither the abolition of the Third Internationale nor the Slavo-Orthodox aspects of Soviet policy could be understood.

But with respect to France's political fate in isolation, the alternative available to Germany represents, despite indications to the contrary, only a completely theoretical interest. If Germany were to be "Sovietized," France would certainly undergo the same fate sooner or later. And in the other eventuality, she would be reduced to the bit part of a military and economic, and consequently political, hinterland of Germany, itself having become the

The French nation is too weak to play the Russians and Anglo-Saxons against each other.

military outpost of the Anglo-Saxon Empire. In *both* cases France's position is thus politically untenable. But what is perhaps less obvious, if just as undeniable, is that this position remains untenable even if Germany is left out of consideration by supposing that — by some miracle — that country will remain forever politically and economically impotent, which is to say disarmed. The lone fact of the existence of the Anglo-Saxon and Slavo-Soviet Empires renders illusory the autonomy of the French nation, which includes barely 40 million individuals. For it is certainly far too weak to be able to practise a “see-saw policy” by “playing” the Russians and Anglo-Saxons against each other. And, moreover, its good traditional political sense would never permit it to try to take over the absurd political game of Colonel Beck's Poland.³ An isolated France will have to *choose* between the two Empires confronting each other. But the geographic situation, the economic and political traditions, as well as the psychological “climate,” unequivocally determine the Anglo-Saxon choice. The future of an isolated France is thus a more or less camouflaged “Dominion status.” And this will also be the fate of the other Western European Nations if they insist on remaining in their “national” political isolation.

From social, economic, and psychological points of view, this solution might appear acceptable. And indeed, it is not *unacceptable*, except from the specifically political point of view, for it signifies the total and definitive disappearance of the Nation qua *State* worthy of the name. But historical experience has shown that, once separated from its political trappings, civilization itself undergoes profound transformations, sterilizes itself and disintegrates little by little, and also soon loses the specific gravity it had in the world as the civilization of a State. Anybody who would like to safeguard the existence and the influence of the traditional Latino-Catholic civilization, which is also that of France (and to which France has, moreover, contributed much more than all other Latin Nations combined), must thus want to provide it with a *political* base adequate to the given historical conditions. And anybody who were to do this would serve not only the cultural interests of his country, but also those of all of humanity. For the Anglo-Saxons, the Germans, and the Slavs do not possess, and will never possess, what the Latins, with the French at their head, have given and will continue to give to the civilized world.

Now, if one wants to preserve Latin and Catholic values, which are also eminently French values, and ensure their global influence — or, in other terms, if one does not want to leave the political world divided between the reciprocally hostile and antagonistic forces of the Slavo-Soviet and Anglo-

³Joseph Beck (1894-1944), Poland's foreign minister beginning in 1932. Beck attempted to promote Polish interests by playing Europe's powers against each other while appearing nominally neutral. Although Beck relied on an alliance with Germany and the passivity of the Allies until early 1939 to advance Poland's interests in Central Europe, he increasingly leaned on Britain and France as Polish-German relations soured over the question of the status of Danzig. See A.J. Prazmowska, “Poland's Foreign Policy: September 1938-September 1939,” *Historical Journal* 29:4 (December 1986).

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Saxon Empires — if one wants to complement these two powers — and civilizations — with a buffering, peaceful, global third one, it would not fall to one *Nation*, and not specifically to France, to coordinate them. Besides the Slavo-Soviet Empire of the Orthodox tradition and the Protestant-inspired Anglo-Saxon, and perhaps the Germano-Anglo-Saxon Empire, a Latin *Empire* must be created. Only an Empire such as this would be at the political level of the two already existing Empires, for it alone could possibly sustain a war where its independence was at stake. And it is only by putting itself at the head of such an Empire that France could retain its political, and thus also cultural, specificity.

This *possibility* of making war does not mean, furthermore, the necessity of actually conducting it. Indeed, on the contrary, it is only by enveloping itself in the Latin Empire to which it will give rise that France will ensure peace for herself and for all of Europe. This Empire will never be strong enough to be able to *attack* the Empires which will surround it, so that its leaders will not be tempted too often to transform their imperial policy into “imperialism.” But it will be powerful enough to remove anybody’s temptation to attack it, on the condition, of course, that it not fall out simultaneously with both of its possible imperial adversaries. If these two Empires were to confront one another in a martial struggle, the sole fact of a Latin Empire’s existence would force them to limit their battlefields to Asia and the Pacific, sparing Europe, which is decidedly too small and too preciously “old” to be subjected to the test of tomorrow’s destructive engines.

II. France’s Situation

I.

OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS OF the historical situation shows clearly that if France remains politically isolated, if she insists on wanting to live as an exclusive *Nation*, she will necessarily sooner or later have to stop existing as a State in the strict sense and as an autonomous political reality. She will end, fatally, by being politically absorbed by the Anglo-Saxon Empire, which stands to become a Germano-Anglo-Saxon Empire. But given the differences of “race,” of culture, of language, and of religion, of traditions, and “lifestyle,” there can be no question of a true *fusion* between this Empire and France. The latter will always remain a more or less foreign body in it, and, consequently, will always play but a peripheral and thus retiring role in it: the role of a satellite, of a “second” which — in politics — is neither always nor necessarily “brilliant.” In a word, in this hypothesis France ceases to be an end in itself and lowers herself to the level of a simple political *means*.

But it is not only France’s *politically* specific gravity which will become negligible if she lets herself be absorbed by the Anglo-Saxon Empire. Her

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economy, too, will play only an entirely secondary role in it. France's economic functioning, too, and, consequently, her very social structure will have to transform themselves bit by bit in order to comply with and adapt themselves to the models and the requirements which, coming from outside, will often be in flagrant conflict with the traditions and the aspirations which, while fundamentally Catholic and Latin, are not for all that less authentically French. Finally, no longer sustained either by independent economic activity or autonomous political reality, French civilization itself will not count for much at the heart of the Anglo-Saxon world, and, consequently, of the world in general. Far from shining outward, France will be internally subject to the influence of the Anglo-Saxon civilization — fundamentally Protestant in its modern form, and basically "Germanic" — which will be sustained by the crushing prestige of the political force and the economic power of the Anglo-American bloc. The first vestiges of this influence can perhaps be perceived in the physical and moral aspect of French youth raised on films and novels from across the English Channel and from overseas. It can thus be supposed that, in renouncing autonomous political existence, that is the State, France will lose not only "face" but also her own face.

The preliminary signs of this state of things are already making themselves felt. Thus the attitude of certain foreign countries and the reactions of some of France's guests⁴ — military and civilian — perhaps give a foretaste, if not of the contempt, at least of the indifference of tomorrow's world toward this country and her civilization. But what is infinitely worse is that the disastrous consequences of depoliticization are already taking hold at the very heart of the French nation. For there is no doubt that the latter's decline, which nobody disputes and on which it is pointless — and distressing — to dwell, goes hand in hand with the country's political diminution, which, for its part, reveals or explains itself with the loss of a real, enlightened, and effective political will. For it is certainly difficult to deny, or even not to see, that the France of yesteryear, of yesterday — and even of today — does not have, or no longer has, a clear and conscious political idea. Not only in fact, but also in his own consciousness, the modern Frenchman lives as a "bourgeois" and not as a "citizen." He acts and thinks as an "individualist" in that sense in which "private," "particular" interests are for him the supreme or only values. And he is "liberal" or "libertarian" and "pacifist" above all because he no longer wants to be subjected to the weight and the demands of the "universal" reality of the State and the means it uses to assert and preserve itself.

But it is certainly evident that this depoliticization of France and the

⁴Although it is not clear to which civilian guests Kojève is referring here, the American liberation forces had been in France since D-Day (June 6, 1944). In the conclusion to his doctoral dissertation on the topic, Andrew A. Thomson reports that, by August of 1945, the French "were sore at the United States' late recognition of the Provisional Government, the low level of American supplies, their easy treatment of German prisoners, their heavy demands, and the poor behaviour of some American troops towards French women." (See <http://www.drtours.co.uk/Pages/Sections/PhDConclusion.html>.)

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French manifests itself not only through external as well as internal political decline in the strict sense, but also through a general diminution, as much economic and social as cultural and moral. It can thus already be seen that by ceasing to be a big and strong *State* animated by an effective — concrete, positive, and definite — *political will*, France ceases to be the vanguard country she has always been until now and becomes a backward country in almost all fields.

2.

THE QUESTION OF the force of France's decline is often asked — a decline which contrasts so sharply with the country's brilliant and glorious past. The explanations of "degeneration," "corruption," "fatigue," etc. are too vague and general really to signify anything. It seems a more concrete and therefore more convincing reason for it could be given.

On the one hand, in the domain of political ideology, the country continues to live on the basis of ideas which were definitively elaborated during the Revolution. The "official" political ideal of France and of the French is today still that of the *nation-State*, of the "one and indivisible Republic."

On the other hand, in the depths of its soul, the country understands the inadequacy of this ideal, of the political anachronism of the strictly "national" idea. This feeling has admittedly not yet reached the level of a clear and distinct idea: The country cannot, and still does not want to, express it openly. Moreover, for the very reason of the unparalleled brilliance of its *national* past, it is particularly difficult for France to recognize clearly and to accept frankly the fact of the end of the "national" period of History and to understand all of its consequences. It is hard for a country which created, out of nothing, the ideological framework of nationalism and which exported it to the whole world to recognize that all that remains of it now is a document to be filed in the historical archives and to join to a new "imperial" ideology, which has, moreover, scarcely been outlined and which it would be necessary to clarify and formulate to raise to the level of logical coherence and clarity of "national" ideology. And yet, the new political truth is penetrating little by little into the collective French consciousness. It appears there negatively, first of all, in the fact that the general will no longer allows itself to be galvanized by the ideal of the Nation. The recollections of the indivisible Republic's potency ring hollow and false, and the call to France's no longer finds the echo it still triggered at the time of the 1914-18 war.

It could almost be said that for the "average Frenchman" the current war entailed, from the beginning, only two political possibilities: France's politico-economic subordination, either to Germany or to England. And in fact, at least at times, this war provoked "passions" in France only insofar as it had to do with the conflict between these two "collaborationist" tendencies — a conflict in which the traditional, irreducible, and disastrous opposition

between the Right and the Left was crystallized. But it is perhaps precisely because of this that the French soldier did not give his all in 1940 and that, after the Liberation, the Resistance movement evokes only distantly the mass uprisings of old. If the average Frenchman obviously refuses to die, and even to discipline himself and to “restrain” himself, for the sake of France, it is perhaps simply because he is more or less consciously aware that “the France” of national and nationalist tradition is an ideal which, politically, is no longer viable. For no reasonable man will want to sacrifice his particular values for a “universal” goal, which is only an abstract idea, i.e. a mirage from the past or a present without a future — in short, a nostalgic dream or an irresponsible adventure.

3.

THUS INTERPRETED, France’s military and moral collapse in 1940, as well as the political malaise that reigns there today, appeared as the price of the country’s recovery and rebirth.

It could be said that a country such as Germany, which is capable of pursuing an illusion at all cost, of enthusing itself for a Romantic [*romantique*] and romantic [*romanesque*] dream, of sacrificing real values to an antiquated and nonviable ideal, is politically hopeless. But the “conscientious objection” of the French in this war shows that the general will in France can form only around a truly and really effective idea, that political consciousness there involves an acute sense of reality and that it is generally founded on solid common sense.

But there is no guarantee that a country which evades the dream will deny reality, that men who do not want to sacrifice themselves to a politically anachronistic illusion will not subordinate themselves completely to an effective political idea in the concrete present, thus realizing a total reconstruction of collective life. In any case, that is an experiment which has never been conducted in contemporary France. It is thus an experiment to be carried out there.

To conduct this experiment, it would be necessary, in lightening the crushing load of the glorious and ancient past of the Nation, to proclaim clearly and in all frankness that the “national” period of History is over, that France is politically dead for once and for all qua *nation*-State. But it would be necessary to add, in saying it, that this end is at the same time a beginning, that here, at least, death is also a rebirth. For the Nation can and must go beyond itself in and through an international union of affiliated nations, where it must and can reaffirm its cultural, social, and political specificity by submitting it, in a peaceful, friendly, egalitarian, and free competition, to the largest group to whose creation it contributes by eliminating itself as an exclusive and isolated Nation. If the Nation dies only to engender the Empire, if the national abdication is the prelude to the accession to the impe-

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rial throne, the proclamation to the people of the death of the Republic, closed in on itself and limited by borders which have become too narrow, will be nothing less than depressing. This proclamation could, on the contrary, have a stimulating political effect.

In the concrete reality of the present historical situation, there seems to be only one truly viable *political* idea — having some chance, consequently, of being accepted by the collective consciousness and of generating and determining a general will — which can be presented to France. This is the idea-ideal of the Latin Empire, where the French people would have as goal and as task the preservation of its rank of *primus inter pares*.

III. The Idea of the Latin Empire I.

THE ERA WHERE all of *humanity* together will be a political reality still remains in the distant future. The period of *national* political realities is over. This is the epoch of *Empires*, which is to say of *transnational* political unities, but formed by *affiliated* nations.

This “kinship” between nations, which is currently becoming an important political factor, is an undeniable concrete fact which has nothing to do with generally vague and unclear “racial” ideas. The “kinship” of nations is, above all, a kinship of language, of civilization, of general “mentality,” or, — as is sometimes also said — of “climate.” And this spiritual kinship is also manifested, among other things, through the identity of religion.

A kinship thus conceived exists without a doubt between the Latin nations — chiefly French, Italian, and Spanish. First of all, these nations are eminently Catholic, even if they are “anticlerical.” As far as France is concerned, for example, the foreign observer is struck by seeing the degree to which the “free thinkers” and even the Protestants and the Israelites there are penetrated by the more or less secularized Catholic mentality, at least when they think, act, or react in French. Moreover, the close kinship of the languages makes contact between Latin countries particularly easy. As far as France, Italy, and Spain particularly are concerned, it would be enough to make the extensive (and, furthermore, very easy) study of one of the foreign Romance languages mandatory in order to overcome all the drawbacks created by language diversity. Moreover, the Latin civilizations are themselves closely affiliated. If certain delays in evolution might create a belief in deep divergences today (particularly on the part of Spain), the interpenetration which took place at the outset (as well as during the Renaissance period, which is probably the historical Latin period *par excellence*) guarantees the possibility of reaching, in short order, a perfect harmonization of the diverse aspects of the Latin World’s civilization. Generally speaking, the differences of the national characters cannot mask the fundamental unity of the Latin

“mentality,” which is all the more striking to strangers for often going unrecognized by the Latin people themselves. It is, to be sure, difficult to define this mentality, but it can immediately be seen that it is unique, among its type, in its deep unity. It seems that this mentality is specifically characterized by that art of leisure which is the source of art in general, by the aptitude for creating this “sweetness of living” which has nothing to do with material comfort, by that “*dolce far niente*” itself which degenerates into pure laziness only if it does not follow a productive and fertile labor (to which the Latin Empire will give birth through the sole fact of its existence).

This shared mentality — which entails a profound sense of beauty generally (and especially in France) associated with a very distinct sense of proportion

and which thus permits the transformation of simple “bourgeois” well-being into aristocratic “sweetness” of living and the frequent elevation to *delight* of pleasures which, in another setting, would be (and are, in most cases) “vulgar” pleasures — this mentality not only assures the Latin people of their real — that is to say political and economic — union. It also, in a way, justifies this union in the eyes of the world and of History. Of the world, for if the two other imperial Unions will probably always be superior to the Latin Union in the domain of economic work and of political struggles, one is entitled to suppose that they will never know how to devote themselves to the perfection of their leisure as could, under favorable circumstances, the unified Latin

West; and of History, for by supposing that national and social conflicts will definitely be eliminated some day (which is perhaps less distant than is thought), it must be admitted that it is precisely to the organization and the “humanization” of its free time that future humanity will have to devote its efforts. (Did Marx himself not say, in repeating, without realizing it, a saying of Aristotle’s: that the ultimate motive of progress, and thus of socialism, is the desire to ensure a maximum of leisure for man?)

The Latin kinship, founded on the unity of substance and of birth, is already a potential Empire which remains only to be actualized under the concrete historical conditions of our time, which are, moreover, auspicious for imperial formations. And it must not be forgotten that the Latin unity is already, to a certain degree, actualized or realized in and through the unity of the Catholic Church. But the religious and ecclesiastical (clearly distinct from the “clerical”) aspect is, in our day, all but negligible. On the one hand, it would be tempting to explain the prodigious flight of the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon countries in modern Times through the intimate interpenetration of Church and State in the Protestant World; and there is no doubt that the fundamentally “capitalist” Anglo-Saxon or Germano-Anglo-Saxon Empire is, today, still distinctly inspired by Protestantism. (Certain sociolo-

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gists even see in Protestantism the ultimate source of Capitalism.) On the other hand, in spite of its radically *atheistic* beginnings, the USSR has rediscovered the Orthodox Church and uses its support, as much domestically as externally (above all in the Balkans); more and more, the USSR thus takes the shape of an Empire which is not only Slavo-Soviet, but still Orthodox. It thus certainly seems that the two modern imperial formations are drawing part of their cohesion and thus their potency from a more or less official association with the corresponding Churches. And it can be agreed that the existence of the Catholic Church constitutes, under current historical conditions, a call to the formation of a Catholic Empire, which can only be *Latin*. (Let us moreover not forget that Catholicism above all sought — often by appealing to art — to organize and humanize the “contemplative,” or even inactive, life of man, while Protestantism, hostile to the methods of artistic pedagogy, was mainly preoccupied with the worker-man.)

The spiritual and mental kinship which unites the Latin Nations seems to guarantee the character of liberty, equality, and fraternity, without which there is no true democracy, to their relations within the Empire. And it could even be believed that it is only by installing democracy in the whole of the Latin World that its “municipal” character, which it retains so long as it remains enclosed by purely national borders, could be removed. Only the Empire, with its quasi-unlimited material resources, seems capable of allowing the sterile and paralyzing conflict between the Left and the Right, implacable at the heart of the single Nation, and by definition poor and thus sordid, to be overcome. Only imperial tasks seem able to give rise to this reforming Party in the *tradition* — but in a tradition which is in no way “reactionary” — which created England’s power, which the Latin countries have never known and without which democratic political life always tends to turn into anarchy and abandon. Finally, the organization of the Latin Empire, which would be essentially different from the Anglo-Saxon Commonwealth or the Soviet Union, would pose new problems for democratic political thought, which would finally permit it to overcome its traditional ideology, which is suited only to *national* frameworks and is consequently anachronistic. It is perhaps by determining relations between the nations within an Empire (and ultimately within Humanity) that democracy will anew have something to say to the contemporary world.

Nonetheless, in spite — or perhaps even because — of the close “kinship” of the imperial peoples, and thus of the “familial” character of the life of the Empire, among the united nations there will necessarily be one nation which will be the “elder” of the others, and first among its peers. It is the Russian people which plays this role in the Slavo-Soviet Empire, and it is probably the United States which will be at the head of the de facto Anglo-Saxon Union, even if it is named for being comprised of Germanic elements. With respect to the future Latin Empire, it is perfectly clear that France will have to occupy the first rank in it. Political, economic, and cultural reasons lead and compel her to take her place there. Particularly as regards Spain, the

demographic factor alone guarantees the first rank to France. And with respect to Italy — that is to say where the demographic factor is unfavorable to the French — it is French industry (situated near iron ore and bauxite, as well as Saar, Belgian, and German coal) which will restore the equilibrium in keeping with France's political and cultural specific gravity.

2.

*I*F THE UNDENIABLE spiritual kinship of the Latin peoples makes the creation of an Empire *possible*, it alone is certainly not enough to ensure it becomes a *reality*. To be able to stand up to the two imperial formations already constituted, it is not enough for France to mention, from time to time, the existence of its "Latin sisters"; it is not enough for the Latin people to conclude, among themselves, more or less Balkan "Pacts," nor to form alliances in the style of "Ententes," small⁵ or otherwise. A real and effective *political unity* must be created which would be no less united, real, and effective than the British Commonwealth of Nations⁶ or the Union of Soviet Republics.

If it is necessary to attain the degree of unity and effectiveness of these two imperial formations, this does not signify that it is necessary slavishly to imitate the political structure of one of them. On the contrary, everything leads one to believe that the Latin peoples will have to and be able to find an unprecedented imperial concept. For they must unite nations full of long independent histories. And it is still less necessary to copy the social and economic organization of the two rival Empires. For there is nothing to suggest that the "liberalism" of great unregulated cartels and massive unemployment dear to the Anglo-Saxon bloc, and the leveling and sometimes "barbaric" "statism" of the Soviet Union, exhaust all possibilities of rational economic and social organization. In particular, it is especially clear that a "Soviet" *imperial* structure has nothing to do with "communism," and can be easily separated from it.

What is essential is that the Latin Union truly be an Empire, which is to say a real *political entity*. But by all accounts it can be so only on condition of forming a real *economic unity*.

It certainly seems that the Latin peoples will be able to create such a unity only if France, Italy, and Spain begin by pooling the resources of their colonial holdings. Put differently, the possibilities for working in and for the colonial possessions must be the same for all the nationals of these three countries (France doing, moreover, everything in her power to obtain from

⁵The "Little Entente" was a defensive and economic alliance formed in 1920-21 between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia (and closely linked with French political and economic interests) with the principal aim of preserving the status quo effected by the post-World War I treaties.

⁶"British Commonwealth of Nations" is in English.

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the Allies the restitution to Italy, indeed to the Latin Empire, of the Italian colonies of North Africa). It is the Empire as such which must establish a unique plan for colonial exploitation and provide all the means necessary for its realization. And it is also the Empire as a whole which must benefit from the advantages resulting from this joint effort of planning thought and organized work. All in all, it is the economic unity of the continuous bloc of the African possessions which must be the real basis and the unifying principle of the Latin Empire.

It is even possible that it is in this unified Latino-African world that the Muslim problem (and perhaps the “colonial” problem in general) can one day be resolved. For since the Crusades, Arab Islam and Latin Catholicism united in their mutual opposition concerning several synthetic points of view (the influence of Arabic thought on Scholasticism, the penetration of Islamic art into the Latin countries, etc.). And there is no reason to believe that, within a true *Empire*, this synthesis of opposites could not be freed of its internal contradictions, which are really irreducible only with respect to purely *national* interests. But an agreement between *la Latinité* and Islam would render the presence of other imperial forces in the Mediterranean basin curiously unstable.

But the colonial economic union must certainly be completed with a metropolitan economic union. Private or state agreements must put the entirety of mineral and agrarian resources yielded by the soil of the imperial countries at the disposal of the Empire. These same agreements must also ensure a rational distribution, among the participants, of the tasks required for political or military security and the economic and social needs of the imperial whole. Finally, a concerted doctrine of foreign trade, sustained, if necessary, by a common customs policy, must guarantee the Empire the possibility, with respect to exports, of confronting the global market and, with respect to imports, to oppose, if need be, any cartel with a purchasing monopoly.

Let it not be said that, from the economic point of view, it is France which will bear all the costs of the envisaged Empire while Italy and Spain content themselves with reaping the benefits of it. Even without speaking of the Spanish mineral resources, it can be said that these two countries will participate in the imperial economy through the labor which they will put at the Empire's (and thus France's) disposal. But it must not be forgotten that work, which is to say labor and thus the population in general, is the most authentic form of national wealth.

Everybody agrees that France's present population is not enough to maintain the French economy at — or to raise it to — the level of the economy of a great modern power. But it would be utopian to count on a massive augmentation of this population. A clever and effective demographic policy will certainly remain a vital necessity for this country. But at the very most, it will be able to maintain the truly French population at its present level. With respect to immigration, France is already seeing the evaporation of the east-

ern European source of dwindling labor, and it must turn its gaze to Latin neighbors anyway. But it is certainly clear that in the domain of labor, France will be grappling with the worst problems as long as it remains purely and exclusively national. Similarly, even if for a diametrically opposite reason, isolating and exclusive (and, moreover, politically impracticable and practically already nonexistent) nationalism is of no benefit to the other two Latin countries either. For the Italian and Spanish economies, limited to their national resources, will obviously not be able to provide their populations with the standard of living acceptable to a modern European, nor to absorb the annual demographic increase which has been observable until now.

In contrast, a Latin Empire comprising 110 or 120 million citizens (who are, moreover, authentic with respect to their mentality and external appearance) would be undoubtedly capable of creating and sustaining an economy of great stature, certainly more modest than, but at least comparable to, those of the Anglo-Saxon and Slavo-Soviet economies. This economy, for its part, would enable the standard of living in the future to rise in the whole Empire, which is to say, above all, in Spain and in southern Italy. By improving the material conditions of existence in these regions, we will undoubtedly see a sharp increase in the demographic curve in the coming decades. And this continuous (and, in principle, unlimited) extension of the domestic market, accompanied by ever-increasing employment, would allow the imperial economy to develop while avoiding the inevitable cyclical crises of the Anglo-Saxon economy, with its practically saturated domestic market, as well as the rigid and oppressive stability of the Soviet economy.

It can thus be anticipated that, in the very short term, France itself will profit from the so-called “sacrifices” it will have made for the benefit of the Latin Empire. For included in the imperial unity, its metropolitan ground and its colonies, even jointly exploited, will undoubtedly give it a return much larger than they could under strictly “national” exploitation — governed by so-called “selfish,” but, in reality, simply antiquated, economic principles.

3.

*E*CONOMIC UNION IS the condition sine qua non of Latin imperial unity. But it is not the *raison d'être* of the Latin Empire. The final and true goal of the imperial union is fundamentally *political*, and it is a specifically *political* ideology which must create and inspire it.

Now, the fundamental political category is that of independence or of *autonomy*. It is generally said that political will is a will to power or to “greatness.” Without a doubt. But it would be more correct and more precise to say that all truly political will is above all an *autonomous* will and a will to *autonomy*. For “power” is only a medium for realizing autonomy, and “greatness” is a simple consequence of this realization. Considered as a

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political entity, the State does nothing more than to bring about a will to autonomy; through it [the State] creates and maintains itself, for through it [the State] integrates and governs otherwise disparate particular wills by creating a “general will” out of them, which is nothing other than its own will to autonomy thus made explicit and effective. Conversely, a State no longer driven by an absolute will to autonomy lowers itself to the level of a simple administration, having to serve, at best, the private interests it is moreover incapable of reconciling.

To create a Latin Empire able to exist qua *political* entity is thus to create and maintain a Latin “general will,” *autonomous* in its will and desiring the maximum *autonomy* compatible with the general political situation of the day. Put differently, the Empire’s actions must follow, in the final analysis, from the imperial peoples’ will to union and must be as independent as is possible and reasonable from foreign wills or actions. Practically, this signifies that the decisions taken by the Empire concerning its internal structure and conduct, as much as its foreign relations, must not be understood simply as a function of the desires and the actions of the two already existing rival Empires.

If each of the three Latin countries in question wanted to find their inspiration in their collective, i.e. state or political, action from a will — illuminated by reason and consequently “realistic,” even effective — to *Latin* autonomy, the integrating unity of their threefold activity would result from it automatically. But if the unity of external political action is an immediate *consequence* of the existence of a will to autonomy, it is also the necessary *premise* for the effective reality of an autonomous will. The Empire can thus exist only on condition of establishing a single guiding principle of foreign policy accepted by all the participants, as much in the domain of general orientation as in that of practical execution.

Like all will in general, the political will to autonomy can be *fulfilled* only by meeting and overcoming resistance. It must thus be armed against the latter, and this is why it must manifest itself, among other things, in the form of an army — of earth, of the sea, and of the air. Not that a will to autonomy need necessarily be “militarist” or “war-mongering,” nor that an imperial will need always be “imperialist.” On the contrary, “militarism” and “imperialism” are outgrowths of a fundamentally undeveloped will to autonomy and do not use truly powerful means of execution (and this is why “militarism” is born of *danger*, and above all of defeat, which is to say of a *weakness*, whether only possible or already realized). It is those phenomena which characterize, above all, *national* political existence, a Nation always being a fragile foundation for the will to autonomy driving it. By providing it with more effectiveness and security, an *imperial* foundation would thus render this will fundamentally peaceful, if not “pacifist.” For if war is waged to safeguard a threatened, and thus wavering, autonomy, it is in and through peace alone that autonomy becomes strong and substantial, and flourishes. But insofar as there will be a plurality of Empires in the world, each of them

will conserve a remnant of “national” — not to say “nationalist” — weakness and thus an “imperialist” and bellicose touchiness. And this is why the Latin Empire will need an Army. It will need an army powerful enough to be able to assure its autonomy *in peacetime*, and peace *in autonomy*, and not in dependence on one of the two rival Empires. Of course, this imperial Army must be one and unique, and must be supplied in all ways by the Empire as a whole. Only an Empire can, moreover, support the burden of an effective army in modern conditions, a burden that would crush the economy of any isolated Nation. And the imperial military potential would allow the strict limitation of operational armaments — always too expensive and prematurely obsolete — at least during certain periods. But it is also very clear that

*The Empire
will need an
army powerful
enough to
assure its
autonomy in
peacetime.*

France is called upon to play the foremost role in the Empire’s military effort. Here, perhaps, more than elsewhere, its time-honored military virtues and its long experience enable it, moreover, to confront the cooperative competition of the Spanish and Italian members fearlessly. And by giving the Latin Army a particularly French character, France will correspondingly ensure itself a fair and justifiable general predominance within the Empire this Army maintains.

The imperial Army directed by France has as its end to make the “general will” to Latin autonomy effective by ensuring, domestically and abroad, the real unity of the Latin Empire. But it can do this only by relying on this unity. Now, imperial unity has as its linchpin the unity of the colonial possessions, ensured by their joint exploitation. Support for the unity and the integrity of its colonial domain is thus the first task of the Latin Empire’s diplomatic and military policy. This means that it is not enough to exploit this domain jointly. It is also necessary that it be contiguous and always accessible as a whole. Direct access between the imperial metropole and its colonies must be secured at all times, and particularly in case of a war. Now, it is certainly clear that the oceans are not on the scale of the Latin Empire (let alone France by itself, which would not be able to secure even Mediterranean access). It should not, to be sure, be concluded from this that France must renounce its oceanic possessions, such as Indochina, Madagascar, the islands, etc. But it would be vain and dangerous to try to build a fleet capable of controlling the access lanes leading there. And in avoiding doing so, it is necessary, from the outset, to construct and direct the economy and (diplomatic and military) imperial policy by keeping in mind the fact that distant possessions could one day be separated from the metropole, temporarily or even permanently.

A vital interest, on the other hand, is that the African colonies be truly *accessible* from the metropole. And this means that, while abandoning the oceans to the rivalries of the two other Empires, the Latin Empire must

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reserve exclusive rights to the Mediterranean. The strategic problems presented by this sea are undoubtedly at the level of military capacity of the Latin Empire, which, with the possession of Bizerta⁷ and Sicily, as well as the *hinterland* and the other shore of Gibraltar, could control access with a very modest naval and aerial fleet. This is why the idea of one Mediterranean — *mare nostrum* — could and should be the principal, not to say the only, concrete goal of the unified Latin people's foreign policy. And let it not be said that this motto was already inscribed on the fascist standards, which were nothing less than self-satisfied. The grotesque aspect of these was not in the idea, but only in the ridiculous pretense of being able to realize it with only the means of an isolated and exclusive Nation, which moreover did not even have the privilege of being called France. But a Latin Empire could, without a doubt, devote all its gravity to this old Roman formula — on condition, certainly, of making this formula the guiding idea of *all* its policy and of devoting *all* of its energies to it.

This is certainly not to say that access to the Mediterranean be refused to anybody whatsoever. There must only be the tangible possibility of it. Or, in other words, it is a matter of having the right and the means to demand compensation from those who will want to move freely in this sea, or to exclude certain others, access and exclusion being possible only with the approval of the Latin Empire and with the means which it alone has available.

Generally, the Latin Empire has no interest in attacking or in diminishing others. It is not even interested in participating in future war. Very much on the contrary, its ultimate goal is to assure peace to its participants, and thus to all of Western Europe. Too weak to attack, it could be strong enough to establish its neutrality and thus to save the circumference of the Mediterranean and the entire West — the Latin West and also the rest of it — from ruin. As a result, if France engenders the Empire in order to prolong, in the future, the autonomy and greatness that its purely national present can no longer support, she does so in her quality as a leading European power, responsible for the conservation of a civilization which she largely created. And it can thus be said that the final goal of Latin imperial policy is maintaining peace in the European West.

Certainly, the political possibilities of the Latin Empire must not be overestimated. It will never be strong enough to ensure its *absolute* autonomy. For it will never be powerful enough to neutralize the rivalry of the two other Empires and to impede, if need be, their armed conflict. It could therefore be that, one day, the Latin people will have to coordinate their policy with that of one of the two rivals, politically opposing the other.

But even in this hypothesis, France has an interest in the creation of the Latin Empire. For if she puts herself at the head of an Empire, her political

⁷The Tunisian port of Bizerta was France's second-largest port at the time of Kojève's writing. Tunisia won independence from France in 1956.

and economic importance will be altogether different than if she is won over by a foreign imperial formation as an isolated Nation. Just as England, by entering into America's wake, is trying to surround herself with "national" satellites (among which she would like to see France), France must not confront in isolation the dangerous advantages of an "agreement" with a truly great power. And this is all the more necessary since England must be content with "clients" where France could have partner-associates.

In particular (and this is truly an occasion to say *last not least*⁸), the formation of a Latin Empire around France would make the positions of a possible Germanic march from the Anglo-Saxon Empire strategically untenable. Under these conditions, nobody will thus have an interest in reestablishing Germany's economic and military potential, which could come about only to the detriment of its western neighbors. But if France remains isolated, even in allying herself with England, it is more than probable that the decision to defend the West against the Russians will result (relatively soon, if not immediately) in a call to the power of the more or less unified Germanic world. But if the danger of an enemy Germany seems to be averted forever, the economic dangers presented by an "allied" Germany, confronted within a "western Bloc" emanating from the Anglo-Saxon Empire, are not at all illusory, but are unquestionably *fatal* for France, even on the political level. Only a Latin Empire could indefinitely resist a German continental hegemony exercised without Anglo-Saxon control — as much for reason of the "means of persuasion" this Empire would use as because it is itself capable of providing these guarantees of European force and of stability which it would otherwise be tempting to seek on the other side of the Rhine.

IV. Means of Realization

I.

CALLED TO ACT externally, the Latin Empire can build itself up only by overcoming the obstacles from outside on the one hand and finding support on the other.

It is clear that the Latin Empire will, from its early stages, collide with a systematic — and, it must be said, effective — opposition on England's part. In any case, all the attempts made so far — which have, moreover, been quite modest — with a view to bringing the Latin people closer together have provoked hostile and more or less violent British reactions. In fact, according to the English only one good argument could be made for a Latin union: That is the fact that the existence of an adequately powerful Latin Empire does away with the need to rearm Germany and thus to reestablish her economic prosperity, which is always dangerous to the British economy.

⁸"Last not least" is in English.

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Given that a strong and prosperous Germany was never considered in London to be more than a last resort, this argument undoubtedly has some merit. But it cannot be denied that the inconveniences the Latin Empire will present compensate largely, in the eyes of the English, for the advantages of a permanent elimination of German political and economic competition. At the very most, it can be said that a skillful propaganda in the English liberal and, above all, the Labourite media, playing on themes which are democratic (the right of peoples to self-determination and the attempt at a democratic international organization) and pacifist (mediating neutralization of the conflict between Russians and Anglo-Saxons) could somewhat limit the violence of the English opposition. Besides, it must be stressed that a direct and open intervention against the attempts to form a Latin Empire (which should certainly rather be called "union," "accord," or "agreement") would be difficult to justify with convincing and worthy arguments, not only vis-à-vis global opinion, but even in English public opinion. For all the arguments England is currently making in favor of a "western Bloc" can apply *mutatis mutandis* to the Latin Empire. But the importance of this kind of difficulty must not be overestimated, the official English line of argument never having been affected by a contradiction.

If, in its opposition to the Latin Empire, England benefits from the unconditional support of the United States, the situation of a politically and economically weakened France, taking great care to create this Empire, will undoubtedly be extremely delicate. But one might suppose that the English and American points of view will not coincide completely with respect to the "Latin question." On the one hand, the United States is certainly aware that the formation and existence of a Latin Empire presents it no real danger — neither military, nor political, nor even economic. For everything comes down, at root, to the question of knowing whether the whole of Western Europe must enter into the English economic and thus political sphere of influence, or if the sphere of this influence must be limited by an economically and politically independent Latin Empire. Now it is more than likely that the United States will not be sorry to see England's relative importance within the Anglo-American bloc diminish. And they may not look too poorly on a Latin domination of the Mediterranean, giving the absolute and exclusive military control England would otherwise exercise over the oil of the Middle East a pounding. On the other hand, far from either wanting to, or being able to, compete with the United States in the economic domain, the Latin Empire could, on the contrary, approach it with a favorable commercial agreement by channeling the flow of its foreign trade toward America, and by diverting it to a certain degree from the numerous shores which are perhaps a little too hospitable to the "sterling bloc" future. But it is certainly clear that the market which the 120 million inhabitants of the three united Latin countries will represent for America is of greater importance than these same countries would constitute by remaining isolated — and, consequently, abandoned more or less completely to England's econom-

ic control. Finally, it must not be forgotten that American public opinion has always advocated the abolition of economic barriers within Europe. Advocates of the Latin Empire will thus be able easily to develop effective propaganda in its favor in the United States by focusing on its free-trade aspect — at least the inter-Latin one. Generally, if France and the Latin Empire are destined to affiliate themselves economically with a group more powerful than themselves, certainly the richest and therefore the least demanding one should be chosen. Now, there is no doubt that, economically speaking, the United States is by far superior to the other countries of the world. Even from the strictly French point of view, a Latin economic orientation toward America is thus preferable to an association with the English economy, which seems to be the almost inevitable destiny of an isolated France.

With respect to the USSR, the Latin Empire could anticipate an even more favorable attitude than that which could be expected from the United States. To be sure, the Soviet Government has always showed itself to be hostile to all “blocs” between nations — small, medium, or large. Opposition to these “blocs” was even, and is still, the leitmotif of its foreign policy. But it should be possible to make Moscow understand that, by remaining divided, not to say “nationalist,” all of Europe will sooner or later be politically controlled by England, and would therefore take an active part in future war anyway, while the Latin Empire could possibly remain neutral during the conflict, thus protecting, to a certain degree, the western rearguard of the USSR. Latin neutrality certainly cannot have decisive influence on the outcome of the war by appreciably reinforcing the already fairly weak Soviet positions. But everybody will agree that, thanks to this neutrality, the victory, whatever it is, will have been obtained at a low cost. In short, the USSR would have nothing to lose and perhaps something to win as a result of the formation of an imperial Latin union. Under these conditions, and as a result of patient and prolonged diplomatic initiatives, it would be possible to expect from the Soviet Union not only a benevolent neutrality, but even effective economic and political aid, given to a Latin Empire on the way to formation — above all if the creation of this Empire encountered a concerted opposition from England and the United States. Even in this particularly unfavorable constellation, it would thus be possible for the Latin people not to abandon their imperial effort if the USSR were to declare itself ready to provide them with the raw materials and industrial equipment they will need. Be that as it may, the experience of recent times has shown that it is only when Mediterranean problems arise that a vague desire for Franco-Russian political collaboration spontaneously emerges on both sides.

In any case, this collaboration proved unable to establish itself on the occasion of the German problem. With respect to this problem itself, it is of the economic rather than the political order, and it will be discussed within the economic paragraph (§3) of this Chapter in connection with the question of coal.

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Therefore nothing remains to be seen other than the question of relations between France and its two presumed Latin partners.

As far as Spain is concerned, it is clear that, on the one hand, Franco's vague (and, moreover, abandoned) Latin aspirations are doomed to failure and, on the other hand, that the Latin Empire cannot come into existence unless *el Caudillo* and his government are eliminated.⁹ For it is henceforth clear that this "nationalist" statesman aims to conserve his power, or at least the social regime he represents, by making an English "dominion" of Spain. It would thus be necessary to replace Franco with a Francophile Government, which is to say one which is favorable to the creation of a Latin Empire under the aegis of the French. Now, without dwelling on missed opportunities, it can be said that, even today, the cause cannot be considered definitively lost. On the one hand, the Franco-Latin idea would find a very favorable welcome in certain Spanish classes hostile to the Phalanx.¹⁰ On the other hand, the United States supports Franco only very mildly, while the USSR is doing everything it can to overthrow him. England supports him, certainly; but the British attitude is difficult to justify vis-à-vis global and even English opinion, above all since Labour's accession to power. A concerted action against Franco is thus not impossible, and France could, starting now, take the initiative in it, reaching an understanding on this subject with the USSR and the United States and surrounding itself with the countries of Latin America and possibly Italy. Only it would not be enough to oppose Franco with the purely negative theme of "antifascism." With respect to other Latin peoples (and perhaps Russians) it would be necessary to appeal, against Falangist Spain, to the idea of the Latin Union, i.e. to that same idea Franco has always espoused and which he is currently betraying to the benefit of the Anglo-Saxons, and particularly of England.¹¹ But there would be little interest in overthrowing Franco if it would result, for Spain, in a latent state of anarchy. For it is as illusory to try to create a solid Empire with an anarchizing and anarchist Spain as it is psychologically difficult to reconcile the French political and economic ruling classes with the far too "red" Spanish Republic. It would be necessary to find, in Spain itself and among Spanish¹² emigrants, a more disciplined and less "revolutionary" foundation, which will also be acceptable to the present Spanish ruling classes at the moment they turn their backs on Franco. But it does not seem that such a foundation can be formed without

⁹Generalísimo Francisco Franco (1892-1975), who ruled Spain from 1939 to 1975, was also known as *el Caudillo* ("the leader").

¹⁰The *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacionalsindicalista* was Spain's state party beginning in 1938.

¹¹At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, Truman and Churchill had resisted Stalin's pressure for Allied action against Spain. Franco had made modest conciliatory overtures to the Allies beginning in late 1943, but, Kojève's contention here notwithstanding, Spain's relations with the U.S. and Great Britain remained cool; in the years immediately after the war, Spain was excluded from the United Nations (until 1955) and from Marshall Plan benefits. Despite strong anti-Franco rhetoric from the British Labour party, Clement Attlee's government maintained the policy of cautious neutrality towards Spain established by Churchill.

¹²Reading "espagnole" where the typescript reads "expagnole."

a prior agreement with the Spanish Church, and thus also with the Vatican. This is certainly not a simple thing. But it cannot be asserted *a priori* that the idea of a Latin Empire will not one day captivate the political men of the Roman Curia (on the condition, of course, that this Empire consents to guarantee the Papal finances). (See §4.)

In Italy, as in Spain, the situation truly favorable to France and to the Latin Empire already belongs to a large degree in the past. For English economic and political influence, powerfully supported by the errors of France's Italian policy, has made very palpable progress there in these last few months. Nonetheless, the idea of a Latin Empire led by France is always very popular on the other side of the Alps and still today represents a concrete political idea there, supported by influential and politically and economically strong classes. On the whole, Italy is drifting towards England even while waiting — vainly, moreover — for offers coming from France and relating to an economic agreement, to a political alliance, or even to a fusion of the two Latin countries. But, here again, it is difficult to conceive of a profound and lasting agreement without a prior agreement with the Vatican.

Portugal could also be called to mind. But this country has been under England's economic and political influence for far too long to be able to be included, from the beginning, in the Latin Empire. There is no doubt, however, that if this Empire were to come about, Portugal (even one which is "Salazarist") would end up joining it sooner or later.¹³

A still more distant perspective opens, finally, on Latin America. There can certainly not be any question of politically connecting these distant countries to the Empire. But it is clear that the Latin Empire would exercise a much more powerful cultural attraction on them than France, Italy, and Spain can alone. Now, this increased attraction could manifest itself in the form of additional imports from Latin Europe.

2.

*A*S FAR AS the Latin Empire is concerned, the key to the situation is, however, not abroad but in France. France alone can initiate this Empire, just as only adherence to the Latin imperial idea can allow the French to emerge from the political (and economic) impasse in which they find themselves. But it will be, without any doubt, very difficult to transform this general idea into a concrete "project" and to make it into

¹³The influence to which Kojève refers is rooted in the Anglo-Portuguese alliance embodied by treaty in 1373 and renewed intermittently since, most recently in 1943. Despite some pressure from officials within Britain's Foreign Office to sever the alliance with Portugal beginning in 1912, the strategic value of Portuguese colonies and islands, as well as its occasional military support, were sufficient to preserve the alliance through the end of World War II. The British Foreign Office again defended the alliance after the 1932 accession of the fascist prime minister Antonio de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970), again on strategic grounds. See Glyn Stone, "The Official British Attitude to the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance, 1910–1945," in *Journal of Contemporary History* 10:4 (October 1975).

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the goal and the motor of a “realist” French policy.

This is, first of all, because of a very widespread anti-Latin prejudice which is probably nothing more than a camouflaged form of this “inferiority complex,” sometimes “overcompensated,” from which France is beginning to suffer. Secondly, because of this economic and political “Quietism” which has been seen in the country over several decades and which paralyzes all desire for action in the strict sense, that is to say activity negating the given, and thus creative or reforming. But in the case of the Latin Empire, it would be necessary to do more than “reform,” since it is necessary to break with all the “nationalist” tradition which has for centuries also been an eminently national tradition, France having been a “great Nation” and the first true “Nation” which appeared in the world. Finally, it is the domestic political situation which already seems to stand in the way of any attempt to focus all French activities on a single guiding idea. On the one hand, the opposition, having become traditional and rigid, between the “Left” and the “Right” profoundly divides the country by leading each of these parties to reject any idea accepted by the other. (General de Gaulle’s attempt to raise himself above this opposition resulted in the creation of a situation which was undoubtedly “splendid” for him, but also absolutely and irreparably “isolated.”) On the other hand, the existence of such parapolitical groups as the Resistance and Catholicism, which are all the more “worrisome” as they are widely scattered while remaining elusive, and the presence of well-organized, big Parties, such as the communist, radical, and socialist Parties, whose attitudes are (as the example of the Radicals shows) more intransigent the less ideological they are — these make the creation of a “general will” around a new political idea difficult.

And yet, looked at more closely, the present situation appears to be much more favorable to a political renaissance than the one observed before the war. It could even be said that a great political action is so difficult today precisely because it has a chance of succeeding. In any case, the difficulties are, in a sense, “normal,” for the present situation could certainly not be addressed with “easy” measures.

The decisive favorable factor is, without a doubt, the existence of General de Gaulle. The Latin idea is nothing but a manifestation of the French will to political autonomy and “greatness.” Now this will undeniably manifests itself in each speech and in each action of the present head of Government. Unfortunately, until now at least, the political will of this Head aims to galvanize a past, one which is, moreover, attractive and glorious, instead of creating a future — an uncertain one, perhaps, but politically viable. In the final analysis, the highly political will embodied in de Gaulle serves an anachronistic utopia, and this fact alone is enough to explain, not to say to justify, the clear impossibility of transforming this subjectively strong personal will into an objectively effective “general will.” Under these conditions, the best solution would consist of de Gaulle’s “conversion” to the idea of the Latin Empire, a conversion which could result only from a series of prolonged dia-

Alexandre Kojève

logues, conducted in isolation from public rumors. But there is nothing to suggest that such dialogues are currently possible, and no reason to believe that they would indeed lead to the desired result.

It would thus be necessary not to link General de Gaulle's fate to the action to be undertaken with a view to politically restoring France in the service of the Latin Empire. It would be necessary to look for and find a larger, and perhaps more solid, foundation in the country as a whole: a foundation which would ensure the stability, or perhaps the return, of General de Gaulle's power by allowing him to embody in his person an already-constituted political "general will." This enlarged foundation would, moreover, be necessary even in the case where a de Gaulle converted to the idea of the Empire had to apply himself to its political realization from the outset.

But present-day France is not an absolute monarchy. It contains multiple and enduring organized parties, and it is *with* them, and not *against* them, that the real foundation for a political operation must be built there.

First of all, there is the Communist Party. This Party is important, for the ideological and material means it uses allow it effectively to sabotage any political enterprise of which it believes it is its obligation to disapprove. Insofar as it is possible, no open opposition on its part should be provoked. But still more than neutrality would have to be obtained. For the construction of a Latin Empire, and even France's simple "national" recovery, will demand a great investment of coordinated and sustained effort provided by the working class, which only the Communist Party could get from it. But can a positive collaboration with this party be anticipated?

By getting to the bottom of things, and by dispelling certain prejudices, it seems one could respond in the affirmative.

In fact, at least insofar as the broad outline of its policy is co-determined by Moscow, the Communist Party currently looks like a conservative party, whose motto is expressed by the Vichy regime's formula: "Work — Family — Fatherland." This party is, in fact, "conservative" because it wants to conserve France's political autonomy (as well as that of Italy and of Spain) and to defend it at any cost against the Anglo-Saxon world's influence, even at cost of indefinitely maintaining the economic, social, and political status quo.

In this way, the Communist Party providentially fills a lacuna in French political life which would seriously compromise the State's stability and its opportunities for forceful action: namely the prolonged absence in France of a party broadly called "conservative" which would not be *reactionary*, and thus of a party which would, on the one hand, attach the utmost value to the State *qua* State and which would, on the other hand, accept that the State can live politically only by adapting itself, without reservation, to a sometimes radical and often rapid evolution. Now, the French Communist Party, while being "conservative" through the force of circumstances, is certainly nothing less than "reactionary" in its intentions: It is, on the contrary, open to all proposals aimed at a "modernization" of the State. Almost its

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only fault — but this fault is very serious — lies in the fact that the “patriotism” animating it is . . . not even Soviet, but openly Russo-Slavic. In these conditions, the Party will never collaborate on the Latin Empire project insofar as this project will not have the approval of the Soviet government. But once this approval is received, there is no doubt that the vast majority of the French Party’s members will be very happy to be able to replace their Russian “patriotism” with a Latin patriotism. Generally, the best elements of the Communist Party are recruited among those who would like to surpass the altogether too narrow frameworks which impose the borders of a Nation on modern economic, social, and political life. And there is nothing to suggest that, after having received a concrete “imperial” content, communist universalism cannot be used to advantage in constructive labor.

It must be admitted, nonetheless, that the Communist Party is a very distinctive “conservative” party and that it is not easy to make it play in France the role that the Tories, led by Churchill, played in England, for example. For, on the one hand, with the exception of certain of its leaders, perhaps, the French Communist Party does not *know*, and *would not want* to know, and still less to *admit*, that it is a “conservative” party, not to say a party “of the right.” And on the other hand, General de Gaulle, and above all the current governing political and economic classes, are certainly “disturbed” by the idea of having to govern with the decisive support of the Communist Party. But without the person and the authority of de Gaulle it could probably not play the conservative and, at the same time, constructive role expected of it. And its activity would certainly remain sterile without an agreement (which could remain tacit, on the condition of being real) with the country’s real controlling strata.

To be able to create a useful political work, a link must thus be created in France between the masses more or less controlled by the Communist Party, the political will represented by General de Gaulle, and the real powers held by the economic, technical, and cultural elite.

Now, fortunately, this link currently exists, potentially, so to speak, in the thing called the Resistance, which is, admittedly, politically quite vague, but alive and durable. On the one hand, the Resistance includes the nation’s most active elements, it has certain inclinations to deep reform, and it has already had not too disastrous experience in political collaboration with the communists. On the other hand, it is driven by an authentically French patriotism, and it has personal and direct connections, both with General de Gaulle and with certain French ruling classes. It remains that, having been formed with a view to a resistance, and thus being born of a pure and simple negation, this movement still remains devoid of a positive guiding idea, and

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it consequently lacks unity, not to say true political reality. As such, taken as a whole, the Resistance cannot serve as the motor, nor even the drive belt or the clutch.

To create the effective link in question out of the Resistance, a choice must be made. This choice is all the more necessary insofar as this movement monopolized, by force of circumstance, many fundamentally nihilistic elements called “leftist intellectuals” for whom nonconformity has an absolute value instead of being a sometimes necessary, but always regrettable, consequence of a concrete constructive will. These fundamentally anti-statist elements would have to be restricted to the literary domain which belongs to them alone, and from which they have escaped only because of chance events. But certainly it is nobody’s place to judge men and to choose them according to whim. The foreseen choice must also take place through the political idea itself, which will reject all those who find it too “conformist.”

The fact of having belonged to the Resistance movement is without any doubt a favorable *indicator* which should always be taken into account. But it is not a *sufficient* condition for participation in the *new constructive political elite*. And it is not even a *necessary* condition for it. For there is no reason to suppose that an old “Vichysois” must somehow be removed from office. Certainly, all those who opted for Vichy because they are narrow-minded and uneducable reactionaries or convinced (so to speak) opportunists must be eliminated. But it would be unfair and dangerous to try to do without all those who had *faith* in the “national Revolution” and who *acted* accordingly. For allowances must be made for the rare people who act and who believe sometimes to err, even if their error is serious; and the State can always make good use of a man capable of going to the limit to carry out a task, even one misunderstood. Even were this only because the current French crisis is much less a crisis of intelligence and comprehension than a crisis of will and effective faith. In short, if the proposed political idea is to have the virtue of eliminating the more or less “resistant” “nihilists,” it must also be capable of rallying the old, more or less “national,” “enthusiasts” as well as all fans of well-executed and constructive labor.

All in all, the elite called to serve as the link between the masses sympathetic to communism, General de Gaulle, and the current ruling strata can be recruited in all social and political classes. And the proposed political idea must use all the parties who will be very willing to support it.

There is no doubt, however, that certain French parties cannot serve as a stable political foundation for an imperial Latin action. Such is the case of the Radical Socialist Party. Because of its social composition, it is a party of consumption, and not of production, which is to say a party which would like to see a simple civil Administration in Government, and not the representative of an all-powerful State. Also, France’s adherence to the Anglo-Saxon bloc will tempt this Party much more than the creation of a Latin Empire, which will not be able to guarantee France’s political autonomy,

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except at the price of long and hard efforts and serious restrictions. It does not follow, however, that a parliamentary and administrative collaboration with the Radical Party is impossible.

With respect to the Socialists, they are not dangerous. The situation they occupy between the Communists and the Radicals obliges them to establish a compromise in principle. And they will even always have a useful function, which will consist in moderating the will to power of their neighbors on the left and stimulating the zeal — even if it is only verbal — of their neighbors on the right. Practically, the Socialist Party can always be used, either within a parliamentary coalition or as a loyal “opposition.”

Much more important, but also more delicate, is the question raised by Catholicism. For here it is less about political relations with a Party than about an ideological understanding with the Church and about a moral agreement with the population which actually believes or considers itself to do so. But this problem would have to be discussed separately.

The all-important question concerning the relations of the political idea and of its elite with the classes responsible for the economic life of the country likewise demands to be treated separately (§3). In practice, it would be necessary to win directors of private enterprises over to the idea and into the elite by trying above all to convince those who have not yet reached what they believe must be the pinnacles of their careers.

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After all is said and done, neither the creation of the Latin Empire nor even the economic and political reconstruction of France can come about without the prior creation of a certain political elite, which would reunite “constructive” members of the Resistance, functionaries having preserved a faith in the State, technicians loving their work in itself, and “capitalists” still imbued with a will to autonomy, expansion, and economic power. For only an elite of this kind could raise itself above the “municipal” conflict of the Left and of the Right without finding itself in the process in the perfectly pure but unbreatheable air of abstract theory or of dreams.

3.

*E*VEN THE EFFORT born of a concrete political will, realized by an elite and supported by the whole of the population, can succeed only if it has an adequate economic foundation.

With respect to the Latin Empire, such a foundation undoubtedly exists. Not, certainly, that the Empire can form an absolutely autarkic unity. And it must be said that autarky is neither necessary nor even desirable in this case,

given that the supreme goal of imperial policy is the maintenance of neutrality and of peace, and not preparation for a war. But the resources entrenched in the earth of the three Latin metropoles and their colonies are such that, rationally exploited, they would allow the Empire to confront the world market on a quasi-equal footing with already existing imperial formations. The Empire will be able to satisfy all of its needs, having recourse only to a normal exchange of goods, without being obliged to accept donations in the form of non-reimbursable “credits,” which would have the economic, not to say political, subjugation of the debtor as a consequence.

There is, however, a dark spot in this scenario: coal. In fact, the Latin Empire will be irreparably poor in solid combustibles. And, what is perhaps still worse, there will probably not be enough coal to serve as a primary material needed for the synthetic chemical industry of the future.

All this is certainly serious. But is it an objection to the formation, by France, of a Latin Empire?

It certainly seems not. If only for the reason that if France remains isolated, it will have just as little, and perhaps even less coal than if it integrates itself into the Empire. In fact, as long as the three Latin countries are, of necessity, large importers of coal, it is clear that they can only gain by forming a purchasing group, especially since the Latin Empire will practically have the monopoly in this domain. It certainly seems that England, and above all Germany, will one day have to export coal, either to reduce the effects of unemployment or to equalize the balance of payments. But it will be difficult for them to sell elsewhere than in the three imperial Latin countries.

But there is an exceptional and extraordinarily favorable circumstance which will perhaps allow France, and even the Latin Empire, to resolve the coal problem definitively. This circumstance is the defeat of Germany, the fear that it continues to inspire in the world, and especially in the USSR, and the fact that France finds itself in the victors' camp while being the country most threatened in the case of a revival of German militarism. It is only a matter of extracting the maximum possible advantage from this circumstance and of doing so such that the temporary advantage becomes permanent.

To reach that point, France would have to limit its claims against Germany to three. Yet the importance of one of these claims is such that the two others would have to be sustained only insofar as they did not interfere with the full satisfaction of the first.

This primary claim comes down to this: Germany is forbidden to trade ferrous minerals other than those extracted from its own soil (mining being supposedly profitable), and all blast furnaces, steelworks, and rolling mills surplus to this are to be destroyed; all additional iron which is necessary (according to the Allies) for Germany will be provided to it by France (or by the Empire) in the form of rolled steel; Germany is obliged to acquire, annually, a minimum fixed quantity of this steel (which will only be delivered

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after proof that the preceding delivery has been used) by delivering, in exchange, a fixed quantity of cokeable coal (which will be coked in France or in the Empire, all imports of coke being forbidden there; the steel-coal exchange rate will, moreover, be calculated so as to cover, in the space of 10 years for example, the cost of Reparations allotted to France).

This measure shows the enormous advantage of giving France, and thus the Empire, the means to exact respect for concluded agreements from Germany indefinitely. In fact, it takes 18 months to construct a blast furnace or a steelworks, and they must be constructed for commitments to be broken in the long term. Insofar as Germany will not use more than its permitted capacity of heavy industry, there will thus be no need to cast its honesty into doubt. And, from the moment Germany begins construction of new blast furnaces, steelworks, and rolling mills (which is easy to observe), France will turn the steel destined for export into war materiel (which it will have no need to stock in advance). At the end of 18 months, when Germany will only be beginning to produce the steel necessary for heavy armaments (indispensable even in the hypothetical case of the use of "atomic" bombs), France will already have at its disposal a military outfit adequate to be able to crush the offender. That is to say that Germany will indefinitely respect the iron-coal convention concluded to the profit of France and the Latin Empire.

It will certainly not be easy to have the proposed measure passed, and firm English opposition must be expected. But the United States will perhaps be less hostile about it, and the active support of the USSR might be obtained. Moreover, an appeal could be made to global opinion, and even to certain currents of British opinion, by exploiting the themes of security, of the struggle against Fascism and of the opposition to the influence of cartels, the project practically leading to the deconcentration of continental heavy industry and dividing it between France and the Ruhr. And much could be made of the fact that the proposed redistribution is economically rational, for it is more profitable to transport the coal from the Ruhr into Lorraine than to dispatch the ore from Lorraine to Germany. (Moreover, even in the view of the average German, the suggested temporary artificial exchange would be more acceptable than the demand for Reparations in kind or in cash.)

If the steel-coal solution is accepted without exhausting France's ability to lodge claims, it would also be necessary to demand the annexation of the Saar, on the condition that France be allowed to expel the German population. This annexation will further improve the coal stock of France and of the Latin Empire.

Finally, but only in third place, Germany could, for security reasons, be forbidden to manufacture sulphuric acid on a large scale, with France engaged to deliver the superphosphates necessary for German agriculture, always in (temporarily and artificially advantageous) exchange for coal.

Generally, Germany would have to serve as the coal mine of the Latin

Empire. Thus, nothing prevents the development of commercial exchanges between the Empire and Germany, on condition that these exchanges cover the imperial needs in crude coal. Military superiority will have as its one and only goal to ensure the qualitative and quantitative stability of the “coal” component of this otherwise commercially normal exchange. And it is certainly clear that even if France gives up a share of the German coal to Italy and to Spain, the fact of being at the head of an Empire of 120 million inhabitants will allow it to guarantee its own share much more effectively than if it remained isolated.

Certainly, the international conventions of the kind which would have to be imposed on Germany are never “eternal,” even if they are guaranteed by a suitable military power. But it would be vain, in politics, to try to count on too distant a future. And if one wanted to do so, the possibility of exploiting tidal power can easily be imagined, which would radically transform the energy situation of France and the Latin Empire.

France is the country most threatened by the prospect of a revival of German militarism.

If it maneuvers well politically, the Latin Empire will have at its disposal economic possibilities that must thus be considered sufficient. But these¹⁴ possibilities have practical value only if they are realized. Now, this realization depends on an effort of will and of work provided by the Empire, and above all by France, which is destined to serve as the imperial arsenal by concentrating Latin heavy industry within herself (which will ensure her political control of the whole of the Empire).

But in France, a lack of economic will — no less definite than the lack of specifically political will is obvious — has been observed for some time: the lack of will to economic autonomy, which elsewhere drives manufacturers to create vast “vertical” monopolies; the lack of economic will for expansion, which in other countries encourages financiers to form large “horizontal” concentrations and pushes businesses to the conquest of world markets; and, finally, the lack of economic will to power, which sometimes leads to production and investments which are difficult to justify from the point of view of pure material gain alone. But there is no reason to believe that these well-known failings of the “private sector” are permanent and without remedy.

Here again it is the nation’s activist elite which could and should intervene. The new political idea, opening future perspectives which could not give rise to any “national” idea, could provoke a renewed economic will to autonomy, to expansion, and to power among “young managers,” and above all among administrators and technicians on the path to “success,” which would allow France to provide the necessary investment in the creation of an adequately large and solid imperial economy. In any case, if such

¹⁴Reading *ces* where the typescript reads *ses*.

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a renewal were not to come about, a “national” restoration of France would be just as impossible as the creation of a Latin Empire would become utopian.

Sometimes it is proposed that the deficiency of the French “private sector” be remedied with extensive “nationalization” measures. But it does not seem that this is a favorable proposition. For if an effective and bold economic will fails to be born within the current ruling class, it is improbable that it will appear in the classes of the small and middle bourgeoisie which provide the French Administration with executives. Unless a truly new social class is allowed to attain power, which is to say unless a true Revolution is caused (impossible, moreover, if only because of France’s geographic situation), it is to the elite of the bourgeois governing class that one must appeal, and it is from this class that the effort necessary for an economic renewal and for the imperial expansion of the French nation must be expected.

In any case, a statist economy has a chance of succeeding only if it is extensive enough. So the planned measures of nationalization will cease to be utopian, fragmented, and thus inoperative, or even purely fictional, only if they can be applied to the whole of an economy of an *imperial* type. It would thus be pointless to desire nationalization without wanting the Empire.

But it would be better, at the very least at the beginning, to construct and develop the imperial economy with the full agreement of the classes who currently direct the “national” economies of the three Latin countries in question. The national Governments and the imperial State would thus not so much “direct” as “stimulate” the economy. In practice, it would be enough to impose certain taxes on primary materials, energy, and labor on industry while giving it all freedom to use them in whatever way is best. Likewise, a prohibition on investments abroad would probably be enough to ensure the rational investment of capital within the Empire. Generally, the State’s political will must substitute for strictly economic will only where, and insofar as, this economic will reveals certain signs of weakness.

Without a doubt, the Empire will have to control its commercial trade with foreign countries in order to avoid its production effort being nullified by consumption beyond its real economic means. But here again it will be enough to draw the broad outlines, leaving the execution in the hands of private specialists. And it seems that this adequately “liberal” dirigisme can come about through the only means which gives the State control over the use of finances. In practice, the Empire’s political actions would have to be supported by the financial maneuvers of a Latin “franc-bloc,” as opposed to the dollar-, sterling-, and ruble-blocs.

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4.

THE POLITICAL AND economic investment provided by France in view of the creation of a Latin Empire cannot, and should not, occur without the support of the Catholic Church, which represents a power which is immense, although difficult to calculate and even more difficult to coopt.

There is no doubt that it is Catholicism which forged and expressed the first energies which still serve as the deep spiritual source for the whole of French — and, in general, Latin — life. It is thus natural and normal that the Government seeks to coordinate its imperial action of secular and secularized catholicism with the expression that this same Catholicism finds in the Church and through the Vatican.

But the success of the imperial initiative presupposes not only a radical political reform of the Latin Governments, but also a profound transformation of the Catholic Church, especially in its Italian and Spanish branches. It would be necessary, above all, to “de-Italianize” the Vatican, without, however, opening it to altogether too exclusive American influences. This means that France, and later the Empire, must provide for the material needs of the central and international organizations of the Church. But this also means that the Vatican must overcome its distrust, dogmatic and otherwise, vis-à-vis the French Church and understand that the Latin Union to which it has long aspired can come about only by an initiative coming from and formulated by France. Now, it could be hoped that the Church could draw on “catholicism” itself, as well as on the Latin idea, for the forces necessary to liberate Catholicism from the divisions and the limitations which were introduced by the extra-Christian “national” element and by the economic and social forms this element brings with it.

In fact, precisely for the reason of its “catholicism,” the Church has always transcended the different frameworks imposed on and through the Nation, no matter which one. But it also underwent the backlash of the “anti-national” struggle. It is thus that the ancient dialectic of the (Catholic) Church and of the *Nation-State* finally led to the doctrine and to the practice of the “separation” of the liberal epoch. But with the liberal — not to say national or nationalist — period now complete, the whole problem is to see things from the imperial point of view again. To a certain degree, there is thus a return to the time of Gregory VII, with the difference, however, that the Church will henceforth deal, on the political plane, not with a pre-national, but a post-national Empire. And this completely changes the situation, all the while newly requiring a “total” attitude and decision.

If humanity which is *really* integrated — i.e., politically, socially, and economically unified — still preserves an ecclesiastical structure, it could only be provided by a Church which is *universal*, i.e., catholic in the strict and fullest sense of the term. But the fact is that the real division of humanity

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resulted in the division of universalizing Christianity into three great autonomous and rival Churches. The Christian, i.e. universalist, basis of these Churches always allowed them to go beyond the strictly *national* limits which were imposed on them (and it is certainly the Catholic Church, by remaining the most universalist of all, which was best able to surmount all the “Gallican”¹⁵ temptations). But even the separation of the three Christian churches renders, for the moment, their inclination to universal expansion utopian: for as they are now, none of them could — *par impossible* — become universal without being exclusive (of the others). It thus seems that the separate Churches need a political counterpart in the existence of intermediary formations between Humanity and Nations, which is to say imperial formations. And in fact, the Protestant Church attached itself from the beginning to an Anglo-Saxon world, which is currently in the process of absorbing the Germanic world. The Orthodox Church, which would seem to have lost the Russian Empire, in fact found a Slavo-Soviet Empire in the course of being formed. With respect to the Catholic Church, it will, perhaps before long, not be able to resist a Latin Empire.

By envisaging the situation from the historical point of view, it certainly seems that it is in this Latin Empire that the Catholic Church should now seek the real foundation without which no Church can exist. Being an eminently Christian Church, but, nonetheless, just now being only one of three Christian Churches actually existing, the Catholic Church seems unable to ignore the support — certainly “realist,” but perhaps also “realizing” — which could give it an imperial formation which goes beyond the rigid and narrow framework of Nations, without losing itself in the still-vague distant future of a unified Humanity, and which for evident historical reasons can only be a *Latin* formation. For the first time, perhaps, a Catholic *policy* would thus be the order of the day. And a Christian-inspired Latin political initiative could perhaps be party to a Christian will realizing itself in and through a Catholicism with a Latin flavor. It seems, moreover, that the Vatican is becoming aware (if only on the subject of the Polish problem¹⁶) that the era of simple “agreements” between the Church and separate States is over, and that the situation demands a *collaboration* of the two Powers, which alone is capable of permanently avoiding the danger of *conflict* between them. Conversely, on the secular side, in the Latin countries and, notably, in France, a general crisis of conscience or of ideology can be observed, which causes some public opinion to seek the appearance of con-

¹⁵The Gallican movement sought to advance French political and ecclesiastical autonomy from Rome beginning in the later Middle Ages. Despite its limited success, its principles were adopted by French monarchs until the Revolution and widely held by the French clergy until 1870, when the First Vatican Council's establishment of papal authority as dogma relegated Gallicanism to marginality.

¹⁶The “concordat” signed between the newly independent Polish state and the Catholic Church in 1925 gave the Church autonomy over religious, moral, educational, and economic activities. Although the abolition of the concordat by the Polish government was not to occur until 1948, the postwar relegation of Poland to the Soviet sphere of influence created, for the Vatican, the problem of which Kojève writes here.

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crete political, social, and economic ideas there, presented or espoused by the Church. And while it can certainly not be said that all “men of good will” in France accept unreservedly the idea of collaboration with the Church, it is undeniable that the Church has succeeded there in assembling, under its patronage, political human resources of very high caliber.

To be sure, there can be no question of trying to lower the Catholic Church to the Orthodox or even the Protestant level — of an “imperial,” not to say Latin, Church. Its calling is to remain the potentially universal Church, and it must continue to see in its universality the supreme goal of all its acts. But it is possible that the *realization* of this same ideal demands a prolonged collaboration with an imperial and Latin political reality. If the Church was certainly correct to combat the indeed premature (Germanic) Holy Empire, it would be wrong to continue to bind itself to the world of historically surpassed Nations by distancing itself from the imperial movements which are the order of the day. Moreover, by becoming a party to these movements, by accepting the spiritual patronage of the Latin Empire, the Catholic Church would fill a concrete and specific political role in it. It would have to constantly remind the Empire that it is but a stage of historic evolution, destined to be surpassed one day. In other words, it would have to keep watch so that the Empire does not congeal in its imperial borders in the way that Nations congealed in theirs by leaving the job of bursting them to war. In short, it is the catholicism of the Latin idea which would permit it to be imperial without ever becoming “imperialist” — with all that that entails.

For its part, the Latin Empire could perhaps contribute to the realization of the supreme goal of Catholicism, which is its transformation into a universal and single Church. Thus, for example, the political cooperation of the Empire with the USSR could lead to an increasingly deep understanding between the Catholic Church and the Greco-Slavic Orthodox Church, an understanding which would one day render useless the canonical independence of the latter.

Be that as it may, it is certainly clear that the true union of the Churches presupposes a real unification of the human race and that this unification cannot come about without the historic evolution which leads there going through a period of imperial-type and “confessional” concentrations. It is only by going through this stage and by surpassing it that humanity will be able to reach the final state of unity which will permit the permanent elimination of political, economic, and social conflicts. And it is only thus that one will be able to respond to the question of knowing whether the indefinite future belongs to the humanist irreligion predicted and praised by some, or to this Christian Catholicism which is the final end and the only *raison d'être* of *Catholic* Christianity, which engendered — among other things — the Latin spiritual world.